

Documents on Diplomacy: Lessons

Choosing an Ally: Terms of Endearment

- Standard: II. Time, Continuity, and Change
V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
VI. Power, Authority, and Governance
IX. Global Connections
- Grade Level: 9–12
- Objectives: The student will:
- Analyze early diplomatic efforts of the revolutionary colonies
 - Describe diplomacy involved in choosing and then gaining a French alliance
 - Evaluate how the earliest U.S. diplomats fulfilled their jobs
 - Examine documents as primary sources of information
- Time: 1-2 class periods (based on number of documents selected)
- Materials: Documents: **1776** *Instructions to the Agent*
1778 *Plan of the Treaties with France*
1778 *Treaty of Amity and Commerce (1778)*
1778 *An Act Separate and Secret (1778)*
- Resources: Briefing Memo: *Diplomacy in the Age of Revolution*
Reasons for Alliance Identifiers (cut into strips prior to activity)
- Procedures:

1. Distribute copies of the Briefing Memo: *Diplomacy in the Age of the Revolution* to students. Discuss why the United States sought France as an ally against Great Britain.

A Teaching Point for Students:

Though it is apparent that the French saw the British as the primary foe in the battle for world supremacy, which was one of the primary reasons for supporting the united colonies, the French and Americans had very specific gains that could be met by forming an alliance. What were these specifics?

2. Explain to students that they will follow a “paper trail” to determine the exact gains that the French and Americans expected from their alliance.
3. Provide copies of the *Plan of the Treaties with France of 1778* and Reasons for Alliance Identifiers (cut at least 15-20 of each Identifier per group).
4. Students may work independently or in small groups, which will speed up the activity. In groups, students could divide the Articles and report results to the entire group.

Procedures:

5. Place one (or more) of the most appropriate Identifiers by each of the Articles in the *Plan of the Treaties*

DIPLOMACY IDENTIFIER—Keeping in mind that the entire document is the result of diplomacy, which items are agreements about the future status of the countries and their land holdings and rights to access?

ECONOMIC IDENTIFIER—Which of the Articles specifically address trade and items transported?

MILITARY IDENTIFIER—Which of the Articles identify actual assistance in fighting and protection? Some Articles may address more than one category, but students should look for the primary Identifier.

6. Share results within groups and with the class. Discuss which Articles were clearly Economic, Military, or Diplomacy and why. Which of the Articles contained two or three? Explain why.

- What receives the most emphasis: economic, military, or diplomacy? Why would this be the case?
- What does France have to offer the united colonies?
- What does France have to gain?
- Identify other countries listed in the document. In what context are they described?
- Have students select the three Articles that they feel are most significant for the colonies and explain their selections.

7. Distribute copies of *Instructions to the Agent* (September 24, 1776), while students are still in groups.

8. Have students determine the following answers.

- a. Summarize the instructions to the Agent.
- b. Which Articles are deemed most significant for agreement?
- c. Which Articles may be tossed if necessary for agreement?
- d. What latitude is the Agent given to negotiate with the French?
- e. Which group of government is directing this negotiation?
- f. Why is there a major difference between the date for *Instructions to the Agent* (September 24, 1776) and the *Plans for the Treaties with France* (1778)?

9. Maintaining the “diplomatic paper trail,” distribute copies of the *Treaty of Amity and Commerce* (1778.) Explain to students that this is the FINAL result of the negotiations between the U.S. and France.

10. Have students, in groups or individually, compare the *Plan of the Treaties with France* (1778) with the *Treaty of Amity and Commerce*. The Identifiers used previously may be applied again as an extension of the activity.

- a. Which Articles were retained in the final Treaty? Which Articles were omitted?

- b.** Is the final Treaty strengthened or diminished for the United States based on changes from the original Plan?
 - c.** Of the top three Articles students selected in No. 6, which were included in the final Treaty?
 - d.** Why was Commerce included in the title of the final Treaty? Would it have fit in the original Plan title as well?
 - e.** Identify the three U.S. diplomats involved in the negotiations as mentioned in the Treaty's Introduction. Who did King Louis XVI designate as the chief French diplomat?
- 11.** There were "under the table" allies in addition to the alliance between the United States and France. Have students read the *Act Separate and Secret Between the United States and France* (1778.)
- Which country is advised of the new treaty?
 - What is the King of Spain allowed to do if the treaty's terms are not acceptable?
 - Why did France (and the U.S.) want Spain's involvement in this alliance? ■